

VZCZCXRO3456  
RR RUEHDBU RUEHLN RUEHVK RUEHYG  
DE RUEHAA #0213/01 0521136  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 211136Z FEB 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7010  
INFO RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 2507  
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1599  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 1256  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1142  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0319  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-2/REA/NMJIC-J2//  
RUEKJCS/Joint STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J5/RUE//  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCJ2/HSE/CCJ5//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000213

SIPDIS

FOR SCA/CEN (PERRY)  
ANKARA FOR AGRICULTURE COUNSELOR JAMES HIGGISTON  
ASTANA FOR ESTH (PUTNAM)

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: EAGR ETRD PGOV KFLU TX  
SUBJECT: GOTX PUBLISHES AI ARTICLE

REFTEL: A) ASHGABAT 141  
              B) ASHGABAT 173 and previous  
              C) 05 STATE 153802

Sensitive But Unclassified; Not for Internet Distribution

Summary

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¶1. (U) THE GOTX INCREASED EFFORTS TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL AI PLAN DURING A FEBRUARY 14-16 WHO-SPONSORED WORKSHOP. THE GOTX ALSO TOOK THE UNPRECEDENTED STEP OF PUBLISHING A FRONT-PAGE ARTICLE AND AIRING A RADIO NEWS STORY ON AI. THE ARTICLE FOCUSED ON THE GOTX'S SELF-PROCLAIMED PROACTIVE MEASURES AND WAS NOT PART OF A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

WHO WORKSHOP

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¶2. (U) ON FEBRUARY 14-16 THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL INDUSTRY (MOHMI) CONDUCTED A WHO-SPONSORED WORKSHOP ON AVIAN INFLUENZA FOR SPECIALISTS FROM DIFFERENT MINISTRIES AND GOVERNMENT AGENCIES ENGAGED IN DEVELOPING AN AI QUARANTINE PROGRAM. THE WORKSHOP WAS DESIGNED TO DEVELOP A NATIONAL PROGRAM FOR AI SURVEILLANCE AND PANDEMIC READINESS. ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY SPECIALISTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY ATTENDED. WHO REGIONAL ADVISORS BERNARDUS GANTER AND CAROLINE BROWN CONDUCTED LECTURES ON AI: CHARACTERISTICS, HISTORY OF EPIDEMIC OUTBREAKS, VACCINES AND ANTIVIRAL DRUGS, LABORATORY DIAGNOSTICS, EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SURVEILLANCE AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE ACTIONS. THE PRACTICAL PART OF THE WORKSHOP INCLUDED A CASE-STUDY EXERCISE (BASED ON THE AI CASE IN TURKEY) TO TRAIN PARTICIPANTS FOR EMERGENCY ACTION PLANNING IN CASE OF AN OUTBREAK. PARTICIPANTS RECEIVED WORKSHOP MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS FROM THE MOHMI TO ORGANIZE TRAINING FOR THEIR PROVINCIAL STAFFS.

WHO RECOMMENDS UPGRADING VIROLOGICAL LABORATORIES

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¶3. (SBU) ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL WHO REPRESENTATIVE, ON

FEBRUARY 15 GANTER INSPECTED THE MOHMI'S SANITARY AND EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SERVICE LABORATORY AND THE STATE LIVESTOCK ASSOCIATION'S STATE VETERINARY SERVICE LABORATORY. GANTER RECOMMENDED SOME UPGRADES.

"TURKMENISTAN IS READY TO COMBAT AVIAN FLU"

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¶ 14. (U) ON FEBRUARY 16 THE GOVERNMENT PRESS REPORTED ON THE WORKSHOP, HIGHLIGHTING THE THREAT PRESENTED BY AI, THE ROLE OF WHO AND THE GOTX'S EFFORTS. THE LENGTHY REPORT PRAISED PRESIDENT NIYAZOV'S HEALTH REFORM, WHICH "SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASES THE RISK OF HAVING AI," AND QUOTED/MISQUOTED BROWN SAYING, "TURKMENISTAN, DIFFERENT FROM SOME OTHER COUNTRIES, HAS A FIRST-CLASS SCIENTIFIC LABORATORY BASE AND HAS DEVELOPED A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF REQUIRED MEASURES."

POULTRY BAN CONTINUES

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¶ 15. (SBU) TURKMENISTAN CONTINUES IMPORT BANS ON POULTRY PRODUCTS FROM TURKEY, IRAN, UKRAINE, RUSSIA, AND CHINA. AS OF FEBRUARY 14, ASHGABAT FOOD MARKETS WERE OFFERING U.S. CHICKEN QUARTERS AND WHOLE CHICKENS FROM BRAZIL, FRANCE AND THE LOCAL POULTRY FARM "HILAL." HOWEVER, FOOD MARKETS IN THE EASTERN REGIONAL TOWN OF TURKMENABAT WERE NOT SELLING ANY POULTRY MEAT AS OF FEBRUARY 10. LOCAL VENDORS THERE TOLD VISITING POL/ECON OFFICER THAT SINCE MID-JANUARY LOCAL AUTHORITIES HAD IMPOSED A COMPLETE BAN ON POULTRY MEAT. IN CONTRAST, CHICKEN DISHES ARE AVAILABLE IN TURKMENABAT'S RESTAURANTS. (NOTE: THE CHICKEN BAN COINCIDES WITH THE MASS DEATHS OF CHICKENS IN

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LEBAP WELAYAT (PROVINCE), REPORTEDLY FROM NEWCASTLE DISEASE (REF A). END NOTE.)

COMMENT

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¶ 16. (SBU) THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THE GOTX HAS PUBLISHED A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ABOUT A POTENTIAL NATIONAL HEALTH HAZARD. ALTHOUGH THE CONTENT OUTRIGHT FALSIFIES WHO OFFICIALS' WORDS AND FOCUSES ON PRAISING THE GOTX'S SELF-DESCRIBED ACCOMPLISHMENTS, IT AT LEAST IS A STEP TOWARDS RECOGNITION OF THE POTENTIAL MAGNITUDE OF THE PROBLEM. THE GOTX CONTINUES TO TAKE SMALL AND INADEQUATE PREPARATIONS TO CONTAIN AI; TRANSPARENT AND ACCURATE GOVERNMENT REPORTING IS STILL NOT A REALITY, NOR LIKELY TO BECOME ONE. END SUMMARY.

JACOBSON